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C O N F I D E N T I A L VILNIUS 000843

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/09/2018

TAGS: PREL EUN PHUM GG BO UZ ZI LH

SUBJECT: GAERC: LITHUANIA WORRIED DRAFT LANGUAGE NOT STRONG
ENOUGH ON GEORGIA

REF: STATE 108064

Classified By: DCM Damian R. Leader for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) MFA Common Foreign and Security Policy Head Egidijus Navikas told Post October 8 that Lithuania is concerned that current GAERC draft language "welcoming the progress of withdrawal" by the Russians in Georgia implies Russia is close to completing the commitments it made August 12 and September 8, including full withdrawal to pre-conflict positions. Navikas said Lithuania, which is skeptical Russia will ever do this, could accept this text only if a qualifying statement also calling for full implementation of August 12 and September 8 commitments is added.

¶2. (C) Navikas noted that while Poland, Sweden, and the other Baltics share their concerns on the weaker text, the Lithuanians are troubled that the UK is not taking its usual harder line within EU settings toward Russian actions in Georgia. He said the Lithuanians fear some EU member state or Russia itself will interpret the "welcoming" language as an opening to advocate the resumption of normal EU-Russia relations and perhaps re-start EU-Russia post-PCA negotiations.

¶3. (C) On Belarus, Navikas said there is a growing EU consensus to send some signal, perhaps language calling for ministerial level dialogue, to Belarus acknowledging the release of political prisoners; however he said one EU state, the Netherlands, is threatening to veto any move in this direction until full democracy is established. Navikas said, however, that the Lithuanians worry that if no conciliatory signal is sent by the EU, the Belarusians will feel forced into a closer relationship with Russia. He said Lithuania was disappointed by the Parliamentary elections, but has to balance its promotion of democracy in Belarus with its concerns over growing Russian influence.

¶4. (C) The Lithuanians agree on our policy toward Zimbabwe and Navikas said he suspects the EU will maintain current sanctions. On Uzbekistan, he said he was aware of the human rights situation but that the Lithuanians are still defining a policy on whether or not to increase EU engagement with the Uzbeks.

CLOUD